

## **‘Princeling’ Lien unfit to be mayor**

Written by Jerome Keating  
Monday, 13 October 2014 07:59

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With less than two months to go before the Nov. 29 nine-in-one elections, the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) is pulling out all the stops in its attacks on independent Taipei mayoral candidate Ko Wen-je (柯文哲), the chief opponent of KMT mayoral candidate Sean Lien (連戰).

Although KMT Legislator Lo Shu-lei (羅淑蕾) has been unrelenting in bringing up unsubstantiated charges of money laundering against Ko, the nation is still waiting for her to provide any proof.

The National Tax Bureau of Taipei has been brought into this fracas after receiving information allegedly implicating Ko of tax evasion from an “anonymous informant.”

Now, Lien’s office is playing the controversial “independence card” by suggesting that Ko was not in Taiwan during the Double Ten National Day celebrations on Friday because he did not want to be seen waving a Republic of China flag.

These red herrings and innuendos are designed to keep a probing media from asking more realistic questions about Lien’s lack of qualifications for the position of mayor. However, innuendo and leading questions can be used by either side. So what can the media discover about Lien?

A good starting point would be his alleged underworld connections. For this, one should revisit the controversial shooting incident in the 2010 elections when Lin Cheng-wei (林政偉) shot Lien in the face during a campaign rally for KMT New Taipei City Council candidate Chen Hung-yuan (陳鴻源), killing an innocent bystander in the process.

What does a review of this incident reveal? A lot. For instance, the police — despite having the shooter, the gun, a dead body and the use of lie detector tests — were never able to determine who Lin’s actual target was. Even Lien expressed concern about that. So why did the police not keep investigating to see if connections to the underworld were involved?

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Lin claimed that the shooting was over a financial dispute with Chen, but that only raised new questions as to what shady dealings could be going on and why the KMT would have such a candidate running for the city council.

Furthermore, since only police and gangsters have guns in Taiwan, how did Lin get a gun? The question is begged if Chen was the only KMT target with underworld connections.

The party’s past and continuing links to gangsters are certainly a concern for everyone and worth examining. However, what is more astounding is what followed after the shooting and how Lien’s father, former vice president Lien Chan (連戰), was able to immediately spin and manipulate an “assassination attempt” into a ploy to win the KMT the sympathy vote in the elections, as well as how at least the KMT-supporting public seemed willing to buy this ruse.

The whole event proved to be a lesson in the standard manipulation techniques employed by the party.

If the KMT is not above trying to manipulate such an incident to work in their favor, they would have no qualms about “telling lies” and spreading false rumors about Ko’s finances, especially if they sense they are behind in the Taipei campaign.

The next lesson that comes from the elections is Taipei’s recent history of KMT princelings using the role of mayor both to live the dreams of their fathers and as a springboard to the presidency. President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) led the way in this — Ma the incompetent bumbler served as mayor of Taipei for eight bumbling years prior to becoming president.

That experience ultimately “qualified” Ma to be the 9 percent approval rating president and endanger the nation’s sovereignty while in office.

In turn, Taipei Mayor Hau Lung-bin (郝龍斌) is now completing eight lackluster years as mayor. He will no doubt also try for the presidency in 2016, but he will have a tougher time than Ma.

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Hau’s father, former premier Hau Pei-tsun (郝伯陵), has declared that the 1.3 billion people of China should decide the fate of Taiwan’s 23 million citizens. Sean Lien apparently also wishes to be next in this line and achieve what his father could not.

Those with any degree of perception can already see a deterioration of capability among the princelings, but the KMT holds fast to privilege. Is it not time for Taiwanese to break the party’s tradition of using the office of Taipei mayor as a prep school for its princelings aiming to run for president? The city deserves more than that.

This brings one back to a more basic and pragmatic question: What qualifications does Sean Lien have except for being a rich KMT princeling?

A study of the Lien family involves simply following money and power. In this pursuit, where does Sean Lien stand on the classic line written by Lien Heng (連橫), his great-grandfather, who in his General History of Taiwan said that Taiwan has no history at all.

Does Sean Lien feel that Taiwan’s history only began when the KMT diaspora retreated to Taiwan after the Chinese Civil War? Is he aware that the first edition of Lien Heng’s history of Taiwan was revised to get a frontispiece endorsement from the country’s then-Japanese colonial rulers? Does he also know that that same endorsement was dropped in the KMT’s version of the book?

Follow the money and power — where does the Lien family’s money come from? A further question is why Sean Lien has spoken of his father as a tragic hero. A tragic hero is a strange description for one of the richest people in the nation. Is it because Lien Chan never won an election? Or is it that he was “robbed” of KMT entitlement?

Lien Chan at least received the infamous first Chinese Confucius Peace Prize in 2010, winning over former South African president Nelson Mandela, Microsoft cofounder Bill Gates, former US president Jimmy Carter and the Beijing-picked Panchen Lama. Russian President Vladimir Putin would win the prize the next year, but why was Lien Chan selected for the inaugural honor?

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Lien Chan’s visits to China are well-known, but this “tragic hero” ironically claimed that he knew nothing of the Confucius prize. He did not attend the ceremony to receive it or the prize money, which, at a paltry US\$15,000, is something that Sean Lien is rumored to spend on a single evening of entertainment in his lavish lifestyle. What was China saying by selecting Lien Chan?

Sean Lien may have a pleasant personality and be more outgoing than his father, but the decision that faces voters in Taipei is: Do they want another princeling mayor who sees the position as a potential stepping-stone to the presidency he feels he is entitled to?

Since the Lien family is much more deeply entrenched in KMT politics than Ma and Hau Lung-bin, Sean Lien’s appointment to such a position would also bring out an untold number of party sycophants wanting to find positions under him.

One further wonders that if Ma’s secretary could easily put about US\$500,000 into the president’s bank account, what would a secretary under Sean Lien feel obliged to do?

The ultimate question remains: What real-life experience has Sean Lien attained on his own that qualifies him to be mayor? Of all the princelings, he is the most in line with the KMT party mold. If he were elected, Taipei would be inundated with sycophants galore. Ko, on the other hand, is his own man and does not have a bunch of lackeys hanging around looking for a handout. It is time break this system.

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